



## Guidelines For Consistency Modifications Of Foods And Liquids

*BQIS Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual's health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This document provides general information on the topic and is not intended to replace team assessment, decision-making, or medical advice. This Fact Sheet is one of ten regarding aspiration prevention.*

### Definitions

**Consistency:** The material of a mixture which determines its flow or cutting properties.

### Facts

1. Changes to the consistency of foods and/or liquids given to the individual are made in accordance (along) with the recommendation of an occupational therapist or speech and language pathologist and implemented (applied) according to the order of the person's primary care provider/doctor. **If an individual appears to have difficulty with the prescribed consistency of foods and/or liquids, the caregiver should remove the food or liquid and immediately contact the nurse for direction.** In situations that pose an immediate threat to the health and safety of the individual, clinicians or nurses can direct staff to downgrade (reduce) the individual's food or liquid consistency to a more restrictive (controlled) one until a new order can be obtained.
2. Food consistencies are described on specific consistency forms and displayed in pictures contained in this Fact Sheet. The clinician may choose to use these forms or another format that contains specific information for staff about how food is to be served to an individual. The definitions serve as general guidelines and exceptions can be documented by the clinician and prescribed by the physician.
3. Liquid consistencies are defined in this Fact Sheet. The prescribed liquid consistency can be indicated on the food consistency form or in another format that specifies how liquids are to be served to the individual.
4. Some foods, such as soups, cold cereal with milk, fruits that emit (produce) liquid when chewed (oranges, watermelon, etc.) and canned fruit have a dual consistency (liquids and solids in one food item). The clinician will provide information on the food consistency form or other approved regional format about any special considerations staff will need to follow when serving such foods.
5. When a thickened liquid is prescribed, the food consistency served must be at least as thick as the prescribed liquid.
6. Caregivers should receive specific training in the modification of foods and/or liquids by the appropriate clinician in the region/home before preparing a prescribed consistency.

### Types of Consistency

**Whole Food Consistency** Food should appear as it is served in a restaurant. Assistance may be needed with cutting.



**Chopped Food Consistency** Food is cut by hand or as directed to pea-sized pieces (1/4" x 1/4" x 1/4"). Food must also be moist. No "finger foods."



**Cut-up Food Consistency** All foods must be cut into pieces no larger than 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2".



**Ground Food Consistency** All foods must be ground in a machine to "small curd" cottage cheese consistency.





**Pureed Food Consistency** All foods are prepared to a smooth consistency by grinding and then pureeing them. Appearance is smooth like pudding.



*A printable guide for each type of food consistency is available starting on the following page of this document. Staff is encouraged to utilize the guide with the team to ensure proper food consistency is offered.*

## Liquid Consistencies

The texture of the liquid an individual receives is recommended by an occupational therapist or speech pathologist and is ordered by a doctor. *The texture of food should not be thinner than the prescribed liquid consistency.*

- Thin (Regular): Includes all liquids, Jell-O, sherbet, Italian ice, and ice cream. This consistency is considered non-restrictive. Nothing is added.
- Nectar: Apricot or tomato juice consistency; some liquids will require a thickening agent to reach this consistency.
- Honey: Liquids can still be poured, but are very slow. Liquids will require a thickening agent to be added to achieve this consistency.
- Pudding: Liquids are thick enough to be given by spoon, but, when spoon is placed upright, it will not stay upright.

Remember that all thickening agents, whether commercial (Thick-It, Thick, and Easy) or non-commercial food items (instant potatoes, baby fruits, baby cereal, etc.), add extra calories to the foods or liquids they are added to. If the individual is on a reduced diet, these calories must be considered. The dietitian must be advised if a thickening agent is to be used.



### References

Guidelines for Consistency Modifications of Foods and Liquids. Retrieved 06/12/15 from [http://www.ct.gov/dds/lib/dds/health/attachf\\_guidelines\\_consistency\\_mod\\_foodsliquids.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dds/lib/dds/health/attachf_guidelines_consistency_mod_foodsliquids.pdf).

### Related Resources

Aspiration Prevention Series Fact Sheets: *Food Texture and Fluid Consistency Modification, Management of Constipation, Management of Oral Health, Dysphagia, Modified Barium Swallow Study/Videofluoroscopy, Management of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), Management of Gastric Residuals, Feeding Tubes and Feeding/Medication Administration Options, and Choice Considerations Relevant to the Use of Enteral Nutrition*

*General Description of Diet Textures* Handout

These resources can be located on the BQIS Fact Sheet & Reminders webpage at:  
<http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/3948.htm>.



### Whole Food Consistency

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

*Refer to current prescribed diet plan (e.g., regular, restricted calorie, low cholesterol) as a guide when planning the menu.*

**Description:** Food should appear as served in a restaurant. Assistance may be needed with cutting.

<i>Food Group</i>	<i>Allowed</i>	<i>Avoid</i>	<i>Special Notes</i>
Milk, dairy	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	
Fruits	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	
Vegetables	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	
Meat/protein (beef, pork, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, nuts, peanut butter)	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	
Starch (bread, cereals, rice, pasta)	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	
Fats, oils	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	
Desserts and snacks	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	

Liquid consistency: \_\_\_\_\_

Dual consistency food considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

Other information: \_\_\_\_\_



### Cut-up Food Consistency

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

*Refer to current prescribed diet plan (e.g., regular, restricted calorie, low cholesterol) as a guide when planning the menu.*

**Description:** All foods must be cut into pieces no larger than ½" x ½" x ½".

Food Group	Allowed	Avoid	Special Notes or Information
Milk, dairy	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	
Fruits	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	Melon balls and grapes are halved
Vegetables	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	Olives halved
Meat/protein (beef, pork, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, nuts, peanut butter)	Any allowed by prescribed diet (skinned or skinless hot dogs or Kielbasa/sausage, cut lengthwise into 4 strips, then cut into ½" pieces)	None	
Starch (bread, cereals, rice, pasta)	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	
Fats, oils	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	
Desserts and snacks	Any allowed by prescribed diet	None	

Liquid consistency: \_\_\_\_\_

Dual consistency food considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

Other information: \_\_\_\_\_



### Chopped Food Consistency

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

*Refer to current prescribed diet plan (e.g., regular, restricted calorie, low cholesterol) as a guide when planning the menu.*

**Description:** Food is cut by hand or as directed to pea-sized pieces (1/4" x 1/4" x 1/4").

Food Group	Allowed	Avoid	Special Notes or Information
Milk, dairy	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Any with nuts, seeds, or other crunchy substances	
Fruits	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Fruit skin, seeds, dry fruit	Fresh fruit should be well ripened or softened in microwave
Vegetables	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Tough vegetable skin	
Meat/protein (beef, pork, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, nuts, peanut butter)	Any allowed by prescribed diet; hot dogs/kielbasa/sausage—remove casing	Bacon, skin, casing, nuts	Tough meat such as pork, steak, BBQ meat, and corned beef must be ground
Starch (bread, cereals, rice, pasta)	Remove crust from bread (none with nuts, seeds or dried fruit); moisten cereal with milk (no nuts, seeds, or dry fruits in cereal); ditalini pasta can be used whole	Bagels, hard- crusted bread, nuts, seeds, skin	
Fats	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Bacon	
Desserts and Snacks	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Hard candy, chewy candy, popcorn, chips, pretzels	

Liquid consistency: \_\_\_\_\_

Dual consistency food considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

Other information: \_\_\_\_\_



### Ground Food Consistency

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

*Refer to current, prescribed diet plan (e.g., regular, restricted calorie, low cholesterol) as a guide when planning the menu.*

**Description:** All foods must be ground in a machine to “small curd” cottage cheese consistency. Foods must be moist and liquids may be added to get the desired consistency.

Food Group	Allowed	Avoid	Special Notes or Information
Milk, dairy	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Any with nuts, seeds, pieces of fruit, or other crunchy substances	Small curd cottage cheese and Ricotta cheese may be served in whole form
Fruits	Any allowed by prescribed diet; canned, cooked, or fresh without skins	Fruit skin, seeds, dry fruit (raisins, prunes, etc.)	Fork mash bananas or fresh ripe melon (no seeds)
Vegetables	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Vegetables with tough skin or strings; seeds	Remove large seeds (e.g., winter squash, pumpkin)
Meat/protein (beef, pork, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, nuts, peanut butter)	Any allowed by prescribed diet served with extra gravy/sauce	Bacon, skin, casing, nuts breaded/battered fish or meats	
Starch (bread, cereals, rice, pasta)	Any allowed by prescribed diet; pastina can be used whole	Nuts, seeds, skin, potato skins	
Fats	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Bacon	
Desserts and snacks	Any allowed by prescribed diet; cakes to be moistened, mashed; Jell-O whipped	Hard candy, chewy candy, popcorn, chips, pretzels, raisins	Some cookies without nuts may be broken, moistened, mashed

Liquid consistency: \_\_\_\_\_

Dual consistency food considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

Other information: \_\_\_\_\_



### Pureed Food Consistency

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

*Refer to current prescribed diet plan (e.g., regular, restricted calorie, low cholesterol) as a guide when planning the menu.*

**Description:** All foods are prepared to a smooth consistency by grinding and then pureeing them. Appearance is smooth like pudding.

<i>Food Group</i>	<i>Allowed</i>	<i>Avoid</i>	<i>Special Notes or Information</i>
Milk, dairy	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Any with nuts, seeds or other crunchy substances	
Fruits	Any canned allowed by prescribed diet; certain fresh fruit (melon, kiwi, mangos, strawberries, bananas)	Fruit skin, seeds, other fresh fruit, dried fruits	
Vegetables	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Vegetables with tough skin or strings	Remove large seeds (i.e. winter squash, pumpkin); lettuce and baby spinach may be pureed
Meat/protein (beef, pork, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, nuts, peanut butter)	Any allowed by prescribed diet; puree with extra gravy, sauce, bouillon, or stock	Bacon, skin, casing, nuts breaded/battered fish or meats	
Starch (bread, cereals, rice, pasta)	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Nuts, seeds, skin, potato skins	
Fats	Any allowed by prescribed diet	Bacon	
Desserts and snacks	Any allowed by prescribed diet; must be moistened	Hard candy, chewy candy, popcorn, chips, pretzels, raisins	

Liquid consistency: \_\_\_\_\_

Dual consistency food considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

Other information: Use only powdered spices \_\_\_\_\_



# GUIDELINES FOR CONSISTENCY MODIFICATIONS OF FOODS AND LIQUIDS

## FACT SHEET

### Learning Assessment

The following questions can be used to verify a person's competency regarding the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. True or False: Caregivers do not need to be trained on modified foods and/or liquids consistencies before preparing them.
2. Cut-up food consistency means that all foods must be cut into pieces no larger than:
  - A. 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"
  - B. 3/4" x 3/4" x 3/4"
  - C. 1" x 1" x 1"
3. Which of the following is NOT a type of liquid consistency?
  - A. Nectar
  - B. Syrup
  - C. Honey
  - D: Pudding

### Learning Assessment Answers

1. False
2. A
3. B